A

SERMON

Concerning the

Unity of the Divine Nature

AND THE

B. TRINITY.

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Tillotson

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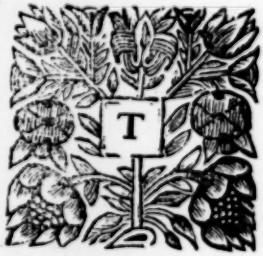
Concerning the

Unity of the Divine Nature, and the B. Trinity, &c.

1 TIM. II. 5.

For there is one God.



THE Particle *for* leads us to the conſideration of the Context and Occaſion of theſe words, which in ſhort is this. The deſign of this *Epiſtle* is to direct *Timothy*, to whom *St. Paul* had committed the Government of the Church of *Epheſus*, how he ought to demean himſelf in that great and weighty Charge. And at the beginning of this *Chapter* he gives direction concerning *Publick Prayers* in the Church; that *Prayers* and *Thankſgiving be made for all men*, and for all Ranks and Orders of men; eſpecially for *Kings and all that are in Authority, that under them* Chriſtians *might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

And this he tells us was very ſuitable to the *Chriſtian* Religion, by which God deſigned the Salvation of Mankind; and therefore it muſt needs be very acceptable to him that we ſhould offer up *Prayers* and *Thankſgivings* to him in behalf of *all men*: *For this*, ſaith the *Apoſtle*, *is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.*

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a Ranſome for all*: As if he had ſaid, this univerſal Charity of *Chriſtians*, in *praying for all men*, muſt needs be very acceptable to *Him* to whom we put up our Prayers, *God* the *Father*, who ſent his *Son* for the Salvation of *all men*: And to *Him* likewiſe by whom we offer up our Prayers to God, and is among us *Chriſtians* the only *Mediator between God and Men*, in virtue of that Price and Ranſome which he paid for the Redemption of all Mankind: I ſay, for this reaſon it muſt needs be very acceptable to Him that we ſhould pray for all men, becauſe he dyed for all men, and now that He is in Heaven at the right hand of God intercedes with him for the Salvation of thoſe for whom he dyed: *There is One God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt*

Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a Ranſome for all.

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately that it is *acceptable to God our Saviour*, that we ſhonld put up Prayers to Him *for all men*, becauſe he deſires the Salvation of all men, and hath ſent his *Son* to purchaſe the Salvation of all men, by the Sacrifice of himſelf; and in virtue of that Sacrifice to be the only *Mediator* between God and us: I ſay, though this be the immediate ſcope and deſign of theſe words, yet they are likewiſe a direction to us, unto whom we ought to addreſs our Prayers, namely, to *God*; and by whoſe *mediation* and interceſſion we ought to put up our Prayers to God the *Father*, namely, by his *Son Jeſus Chriſt*, who is conſtituted the only *Mediator between God and Men.*

There are ſeveral *Propoſitions* contained in this and the following *verſe*; but I ſhall at preſent confine my ſelf to the *firſt*, namely, That *there is One God*, that is, *but One*, as *St. Paul* elſewhere expreſſeth it, *There is none other God but One.* And 1 Cor. 8. 4.
Moſes lays this as the Foundation of the *Natural* Law, as well as of the *Jewiſh* Religion, *The Lord* Deut. 4. 35.
he is One God, and there is none beſides him, that is, beſides *Jehovah*, whom the People of *Iſrael* did worſhip as the only true God. And this the Prophet *Iſaiah* perpetually declares in oppoſition

to the *Polytheiſm* and variety of Gods among the
Iſai. 44. 6. *Heathen. I am the firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is no God.* And again, *Is there any*
v. 8. *God beſides me? there is no God, I know not any*: He, who hath an infinite knowledge and knows all things, knows no other God. And our *B. Saviour* makes this the *Fundamental Article* of all Religion, and the knowledge of it neceſſary to every man's Salvation, *This*, ſays *He*, *is life eternal, to know thee the only true God.*

The *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is a *Notion* wherein the greateſt and the wiſeſt part of Mankind did always agree, and therefore may reaſonably be preſumed to be either *natural*, or to have ſprung from ſome *Original Tradition* delivered down to us from the *firſt Parents* of Mankind: I mean, that there is *One Supreme Being*, the *Author* and *Cauſe* of all things, whom the moſt ancient of the *Heathen Poets* commonly called *the Father of Gods and men.* And thus *Ariſtotle* in his *Metaphyſicks* defines God, *the eternal and moſt excellent*, or *beſt of all Living Beings.* And this *Notion*, of *One Supreme Being*, agrees very well with that exact Harmony which appears in the Frame and Government of the World, in which we ſee all things conſpiring to one End, and continuing in one uniform Order and Courſe; which cannot reaſonably be aſcribed to any other but a conſtant

ſtant and uniform Cauſe; and which to a conſidering man does plainly ſhew that all things are made and governed by that *One* powerful *Principle*, and great and wiſe *Mind* which we call *God*.

But although the generality of Mankind had a *Notion* of *One Supreme God*, yet the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen* plainly ſhews that this *Notion*, in proceſs of Time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehenſion of a *Plurality* of *Gods*; though in Reaſon it is evident enough, that there can be no more Gods than *One*; and that *One*, who is of infinite Perfection, is as ſufficient to all purpoſes whatſoever, as ten thouſand Deities, if they were poſſible, could poſſibly be; as I ſhall ſhew in the following Diſcourſe.

Now this multitude of *Deities*, which the fond Superſtition and vain Imagination of Men had formed to themſelves, were by the *Wiſer* ſort, who being forced to comply with the Follies of the People endeavoured to make the beſt of them, ſuppoſed to be either *Parts* of the *Univerſe* which the *Egyptians*, as *Plutarch* tells us, thought to be the ſame with *God*; but then the more conſiderable Parts of the *Univerſe* they parcelled out into ſeveral *Deities*; and as the *Ocean* hath ſeveral *Names*, according to the ſeveral *Coaſts* and

and *Countries* by which it paſſeth; ſo they gave ſeveral *Names* to this *One Deity* according to the ſeveral Parts of the World which ſeveral Nations made the Objects of their Worſhip.

Or elſe, they adored the ſeveral Perfections and Powers of the *One Supreme God* under ſeveral *Names* and *Titles*, with regard to the various *Bleſſings* and *Benefits* which they thought they received from them.

Thus the *Indian* Philoſophers, the *Brachmans*, are ſaid to have worſhipped the *Sun* as the *Supreme Deity*; and he certainly is the moſt *Worſhipful* of all ſenſible Beings, and bids faireſt for a *Deity*; eſpecially if he was, as they ſuppoſed, animated by a *Spirit* endued with knowledg and underſtanding. And if a man, who had been bred in a dark Cave, ſhould all on the ſudden be brought out at Noon-day to behold this viſible World; after he had viewed and conſider'd it awhile, he would in all probability pitch upon the *Sun* as the moſt likely, of all the things he had ſeen, to be a *Deity*. For if ſuch a man had any Notion of *a God*, and were to chuſe one upon ſight, he would without diſpute fix upon the *Sun*, and fall down before Him and worſhip Him.

And *Macrobius* manageth this as his main *Plea* for the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen*; that under all the

the ſeveral *Names* of their *Gods* they Worſhipped the *Sun:* And this diverſity of *Names* was but a more diſtinct conception and acknowledgment of the many Bleſſings and advantages which Mankind received from Him, and a more particular and expreſs Adoration of the ſeveral *Powers* and *Perfections* which were in *Him.* And this was the very beſt defence, and all the tolerable ſenſe which the *Wiſeſt* among the *Heathen* could make of the *multitude* of their *Deities.*

And yet whilſt they generally owned *One Supreme Being* that was the *Principle* and *Original* of all things, they worſhipped ſeveral *ſubordinate Deities* as really diſtinct from one another. Some of theſe they fancied to be *ſuperior* to the reſt and to have their reſidence in *Heaven*; by which *Marſilius Ficinus* ſuppoſes *Plato* to mean no more but the *Chief* of the *Angels.* Theſe were called Θεοὶ, *Dij Superi* and *Dij Cæleſtes*, *ſuperior* and *heavenly Gods*: The *Scripture* terms them *the Hoſt of Heaven*, meaning the *Sun*, *Moon* and Stars, which they ſuppoſed to be animated, or at leaſt to be inhabited by *Angels*, or glorious Spirits, whom they called *Gods.*

Other of their *Deities* were accounted much *inferior* to theſe, being ſuppoſed to be the *Souls* of their deceaſed *Heroes*; who for their great and worthy Deeds, when they lived upon Earth, were

were ſuppoſed after Death to be tranſlated into the number of their *Gods*. And theſe were called *Semidei* and *Deaſtri*, that is, *half Gods* and *a ſort of Gods*: And as the other were *Celeſtial*, ſo theſe were Δαίμονες ἔπιχθονιοι a kind of *Terreſtrial* Spirits that were *Preſidents* and *Procurators* of Human affairs here below, that is, a middle ſort of *Divine Powers* that were *Mediators* and *Agents* between *God* and *Men*, and did carry the Prayers and Supplications of Men to God, and bring down the Commands and Bleſſings of God to Men.

But in the midſt of all this *Crowd* and confuſion of *Deities*, and the various *Superſtitions* about them, the Wiſer *Heathen*, as *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, *Tully*, *Plutarch* and others, preſerved a true Notion of *One Supreme God*, whom they defined an *infinite Spirit*, *pure from all Matter and free from all imperfection*: And all the variety of their *Worſhip* was, as they pretended in excuſe of it, but a more particular owning of the various repreſentations of the *Divine* Power and Excellencies which manifeſted themſelves in the World, and of the ſeveral communications of Bleſſings and Favours by *them* imparted to *Men*: Nay, *Tertullian* tells us, that even when *Idolatry* had very much obſcured the Glory of the *Sovereign Deity*, yet the greater part of Man-

Adverſus Marcionem, l. 1. c. 10.

Mankind did ſtill in their common *Forms* of *Speech* appropriate the Name of *God* in a more eſpecial and peculiar manner to *One*, ſaying, *If God grant*, *If God pleaſe*, and the like.

So that there is ſufficient ground to believe that the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, or the Notion of *One Supreme God*, Creator and Governor of the World, was the Primitive and general belief of Mankind: And that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* were a corruption and degeneracy from the *Original Notion* which Mankind had concerning *God*; as the *Scripture-Hiſtory* doth declare and teſtify.

And this account which I have given of the *Heathen Idolatry* doth by no means excuſe it. For whatever may be ſaid by way of extenuation in behalf of the wiſer and more devout among them, the generality were groſsly guilty both of believing *more Gods*, and of worſhipping *falſe Gods*.

And this muſt needs be a very great Crime, ſince the *Scripture* every where declares God to be particularly *jealous* in this Caſe, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praiſe to graven Images*. Nay, we may not ſo much as make uſe of ſenſible Images to put us in mind of God, leſt devout Ignorance, ſeeing the Worſhip which Wiſe men paid towards an *Idol*, ſhould be drawn

to terminate their Worſhip there, as being the very *Deity* it ſelf; which was certainly the Caſe of the greateſt part of the *Heathen* World.

And ſurely thoſe *Chriſtians* are in no leſs danger of *Idolatry*, who pay a Veneration to *Images* by *kneeling down* and *praying* before them; and in this they are much more inexcuſable, becauſe they offend againſt a much clearer Light; and yet when they go about to juſtify this Practice are able to bring no other nor better *Pleas* for themſelves than the *Heathen* did for their worſhiping of *Images*, and for praying to their *inferior Deities*, whom they looked upon as *Mediators* between the *Gods* in Heaven and *Men* upon Earth.

There is but one *Objection*, that I know of, againſt the general Conſent of Mankind concerning the *Unity of God*; and it is this, That there was an ancient Doctrine of ſome of the moſt ancient Nations, that there were *two Firſt Cauſes* or *Principles* of all things; the *one* the Cauſe of all *Good*, and the *other* of all the *Evil* that is in the World: The reaſon whereof ſeems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of ſo contrary a nature, as *Good* and *Evil*, could proceed from *one* and the ſame *Cauſe*.

And theſe *two Principles* in ſeveral Nations were called by ſeveral Names. *Plutarch* ſays that among the *Greeks* the *Good Principle* was called *God*,

God, and the *Evil Principle* Δαίμων or the *Devil*. In conformity to which ancient *Tradition* the *Manichees*, a *Sect* which called themſelves *Chriſtians*, did advance *two Principles*, the *one* infinitely *Good*, which they ſuppoſed to be the *Original Cauſe* of all the *good* which is in the World; the *other* infinitely *Evil*, to which they aſcribed all the *evils* that are in the World.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient *Tradition* concerning that *old Serpent* the *Devil*, the Head of the *fallen Angels*, who by tempting our *Firſt Parents* to tranſgreſs a poſitive and expreſs Law of God brought *Sin* firſt into the World and all the *Evils* conſequent upon it; of which the *Scripture* gives us a moſt expreſs and particular account.

And as to the *Notion* of a *Being infinitely Evil*, into which this *Tradition* was corrupted, after *Idolatry* had prevailed in the World, beſides that it is a Contradiction, it would likewiſe be to no purpoſe to aſſert *two* oppoſite *Principles* of *infinite*, that is of *equal* force and Power, for *two Infinites* muſt of neceſſity be equal to one another; becauſe nothing can be more or greater than infinite, and therefore if *two* infinite Beings were poſſible they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwiſe.

Now that the Notion of a *Principle infinitely Evil* is a Contradiction will be very plain, if we conſider that what is *infinitely Evil* muſt in ſtrict Reaſoning, and by neceſſary conſequence, be infinitely imperfect; and therefore infinitely weak, and for that reaſon, though never ſo malicious and miſchievous, yet being infinitely weak and fooliſh, could never be in a capacity either to contrive miſchief or to execute it.

But if it ſhould be admitted that a Being infinitely miſchievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no Evil; becauſe the oppoſite *Principle* of *infinite Goodneſs*, being alſo infinitely Wiſe and Powerful, they would tye up one anothers hands. So that upon this ſuppoſition the *Notion* of a *Deity* muſt ſignify juſt nothing, becauſe by virtue of the eternal oppoſition and equal conflict of theſe *two Principles* they would keep one another at a perpetual *Baye*; and being juſt an equal Match to one another, the *one* having as much mind and power to do *good* as the *other* to do *evil*, inſtead of being *two Deities* they would be but *two Idols*, able to do neither *good* nor *evil*.

And having, I hope, now ſufficiently cleared this *Objection*, I ſhall proceed to ſhew how agreeable this *Principle*, that *there is but one God*, is to the common Reaſon of Mankind, and to the cleareſt

cleareſt and moſt eſſential Notions which we have of God: And this will appear theſe *two* ways.

Firſt, by conſidering the moſt eſſential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, from the repugnancy and impoſſibility, the great abſurdity and inconvenience of ſuppoſing more Gods than One.

Firſt, by conſidering the moſt eſſential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature. *Abſolute Perfection* which we aſcribe to God, as the moſt eſſential Notion which Mankind hath always had concerning Him, does neceſſarily ſuppoſe *Unity*; becauſe this is *eſſential* to the Notion of a Being that is *abſolutely perfect*, that all Perfection meets and is united in ſuch a Being: But to imagine more Gods, and ſome Perfections to be in one and ſome in another, does deſtroy the moſt *eſſential* Notion which men have of God, namely, that *He* is a *Being abſolutely perfect*, that is, as perfect as is poſſible: Now to ſuppoſe ſome Perfections in one God which are not in another, is to ſuppoſe ſome poſſible Perfection to be wanting in God, which is a Contradiction to the moſt natural and the moſt eaſie Notion which all men have of God, that He is a Being in whom all Perfections do meet and are united: But if we ſuppoſe more Gods, each of which hath all Perfections

ſections united in Him, then all but One would be ſuperfluous and needleſs; and therefore by juſt and neceſſary conſequence not only *may*, but of neceſſity *muſt* be ſuppoſed not to be; ſince *neceſſary exiſtence* is *eſſential* to the *Deity*; and therefore if *but One God* be neceſſary, there can be no more.

Secondly, from the *repugnancy* and *impoſſibility*, the great *abſurdity* and *inconvenience* of the contrary. For ſuppoſe there were more *Gods*, *two* for example; and if there may be *two* there may be a *Million*, for we can ſtop no where: I ſay, ſuppoſe *two Gods*; either theſe *two* would be in all Perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: If equal and alike in all things then, as I ſaid before, one of them would be needleſs and ſuperfluous, and if *one* why not as well the *other*? they being ſuppoſed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no neceſſity at all of the being of a God; and yet it is granted on all hands that *neceſſary exiſtence* is eſſential to the Notion of a *God*: But if they be unequal, that is, *one* of them inferior to and leſs perfect than the *other*, that which is inferior and leſs perfect could not be God, becauſe he would not have all perfection. So that which way ſoever we turn the thing and look upon it, the Notion of more Gods than One is by its own repugnancy

pugnancy and ſelf-contradiction deſtructive of it ſelf.

Before I come to apply this *Doctrine* of the *Unity of God*, I muſt not paſs by a very conſiderable *Difficulty*, which will moſt certainly ariſe in every mans mind; without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the *Doctrine* of the *B. Trinity*, or of *three* real *Differences* or *diſtinct Perſons* in *One* and the ſame *Divine Nature*.

And though this be not a *Difficulty* peculiar only to the *Chriſtian* Religion, as by the generality of thoſe who urge this *Objection* againſt *Chriſtians* hath been inconſiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before *Chriſtianity* appeared in the world, there was a very ancient *Tradition*, both among *Jews* and *Heathen*, concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Diſtinctions* in the Divine Nature, very nearly reſembling the *Chriſtian* Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as I ſhall have occaſion more fully to ſhew by and by: Yet it cannot be denied, but that this *Difficulty* doth in a more eſpecial manner affect the *Chriſtian* Religion; the generality of *Chriſtians*, who do moſt firmly believe the *Trinity*, believing likewiſe at the ſame time, more ſtedfaſtly if it be poſſible, *that there is but One God. To us*, ſaith St. *Paul*, that is, *to us Chriſtians, there* 1 Cor. 8. *is* 6.

is but One God. But how can this poſſibly conſiſt with the common *Doctrine* of *Chriſtians* concerning the *Trinity*, God the *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*, to each of whom they Attribute, as they verily believe the *Scripture* does, the moſt incommunicable *Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature*? And what is this leſs in effect than to ſay, *That there are three Gods*?

For the clearing of this *Difficulty* I ſhall, with all the brevity I can, offer theſe following *Conſiderations*; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced Judgment, will be ſufficient to remove it, or at leaſt to break the main force and ſtrength of it.

I. I. I deſire it may be well conſidered, that there is a wide difference between the nice *Speculations* of the *Schools*, beyond what is revealed in *Scripture*, concerning the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, and what the *Scripture only* teaches and aſſerts concerning this *Myſtery*. For it is not to be denied but that the *Schoolmen*, who abounded in wit and leiſure, though very few among them had either exact skill in the *H. Scriptures*, or in *Eccleſiaſtical Antiquity* and the *Writings* of the *ancient Fathers* of the *Chriſtian* Church: I ſay, it cannot be denied but that theſe *Speculative* and very acute men, who wrought a great part of their

Divinity

Divinity out of their own Brains as *Spiders* do *Cobwebs* out of their own bowels, have ſtarted a thouſand *ſubtleties* about this *Myſtery*, ſuch as no *Chriſtian* is bound to trouble his head withal; much leſs is it neceſſary for him to underſtand thoſe *niceties* which we may reaſonably preſume that they who talk of them did themſelves never thoroughly underſtand; and leaſt of all is it neceſſary to believe them. The modeſty of *Chriſtians* is contented in *Divine Myſteries* to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curioſity to be *wiſe above that which is written.* It is enough to believe what God ſays concerning theſe matters; and if any man will venture to ſay more, every other man ſurely is at his liberty to believe as he ſees reaſon.

II. I deſire it may in the next place be conſi- II.
dered, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, even as it is aſſerted in *Scripture*, is acknowledged by us to be ſtill a great *Myſtery*, and ſo imperfectly reveal-ed as to be in a great meaſure incomprehenſible by Human Reaſon. And therefore though ſome learned and judicious Men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great *Myſtery* by the ſtrength of *Reaſon*, yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of ſuch an At-

tempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.

All that I ever designed upon this Argument was to make out the credibility of the thing from the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the *Scripture* hath given us; lest by endeavouring to lay the *Difficulties* which are already started about it new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some mea-
Serm. II. sure done in one of the former *Discourses*. Nor indeed do I see that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter, and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it.

For in this and the like Cases I take an *implicite Faith* to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, though we do not fully understand his meaning in such a Revelation. And thus every man who believes the *H. Scriptures* to be a truly *Divine* Revelation does *implicitely* believe a great part of the *Prophetical* Books of *Scripture* and several obscure expressions in those Books, though he do not particularly understand the

the meaning of all the Predictions and expreſſions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good *Chriſtians* who do not believe and comprehend the Myſteries of Faith nicely enough to approve themſelves to a *Scholaſtical* and Magiſterial *Judge* of *Controverſies*, who yet if they do heartily embrace the *Doctrines* which are clearly revealed in *Scripture* and live up to the plain *Precepts* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, will I doubt not be very well approved by the Great and Juſt, and by the *infallibly* Infallible Judge of the World.

III. Let it be further conſidered, That though neither the word *Trinity*, nor perhaps *Perſon*, in the ſenſe in which it is uſed by *Divines* when they treat of this *Myſtery*, be any where to be met with in *Scripture*; yet it cannot be denied but that *Three* are there ſpoken of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*, in whoſe Name every *Chriſtian* is baptized, and to each of whom the higheſt *Titles* and *Properties* of *God* are in *Scripture* attributed: And theſe *Three* are ſpoken of with as much diſtinction from one another as we uſe to ſpeak of *three* ſeveral Perſons. III.

So that though the word Trinity be not found in *Scripture*, yet theſe *Three* are there expreſly and frequently mentioned; and *Trinity* is nothing

but *three* of any thing. And ſo likewiſe though the word *Perſon* be not there expreſly applied to *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to expreſs the diſtinction of theſe *Three*: For which reaſon I could never yet ſee any juſt cauſe to quarrel at this *term*. For ſince the *H. Spirit* of God in *Scripture* hath thought fit in ſpeaking of theſe *Three* to diſtinguiſh them from one another, as we uſe in common ſpeech to diſtinguiſh *three* ſeveral *Perſons*, I cannot ſee any reaſon why, in the explication of this *Myſtery* which purely depends upon *Divine Revelation*, we ſhould not ſpeak of it in the ſame manner as the *Scripture* doth: And though the word *Perſon* is now become a *Term of Art*, I ſee no cauſe why we ſhould decline it, ſo long as we mean by it neither more nor leſs than what the *Scripture* ſays in other words.

IV. IV. It deſerves further to be conſidered, That there hath been a very *ancient Tradition* concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Diſtinctions* in the *Divine Nature*; and theſe, as I ſaid before, very nearly reſembling the *Chriſtian* Doctrine of the *Trinity*.

Whence this *Tradition* had its original is not eaſie upon good and certain grounds to ſay; but certain it is that the *Jews* anciently had this *Notion*: And

And that they did diſtinguiſh the *Word of God*, and *the H. Spirit of God*, from *Him* who was *abſolutely* called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the *Firſt Principle* of all things; as is plain from *Philo Judæus*, and *Moſes Nachmanides*, and others cited L. 5. by the Learned *Grotius* in his incomparable *Book* of the *Truth of the Chriſtian Religion*.

And among the *Heathen*, *Plato*; who probably enough might have this *Notion* from the *Jews*, did make *three Diſtinctions* in the *Deity* by the Names of *eſſential Goodneſs*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit*.

So that whatever Objections this matter may be liable to, it is not ſo peculiar a *Doctrine* of the *Chriſtian* Religion as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearneſs and certainty: And conſequently, neither the *Jews* nor *Plato* have any reaſon to object it to us *Chriſtians*; eſpecially ſince *they* pretend no other ground for it but either their own *Reaſon*, or an *ancient Tradition* from their *Fathers*: whereas we *Chriſtians* do appeal to expreſs *Divine Revelation* for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it ſingly upon that account.

V. It is beſides very conſiderable, That the *Scriptures* do deliver this Doctrine of the *Trinity* without any manner of doubt or queſtion concerning the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*: And not only V.

only ſo, but do moſt ſtedfaſtly and conſtantly aſſert that there is but *One God*: And in thoſe very *Texts*, in which theſe *three Differences* are mentioned, the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is expreſly aſſerted; as where St. *John* makes mention of the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, the *Unity* of theſe *Three* is likewiſe affirmed, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and theſe Three are One.*

VI. VI. It is yet further conſiderable, That from this *Myſtery*, as delivered in *Scripture*, a Plurality of Gods cannot be inferred without making the *Scripture* groſly to contradict it ſelf; which I charitably ſuppoſe the *Socinians* would be as loth to admit as we our ſelves are. And if either *Councils*, or *Fathers*, or *Schoolmen*, have ſo explained this *Myſtery* as to give any juſt ground, or ſo much as a plauſible colour for ſuch an Inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the *H. Scriptures*; but rather, as the *Apoſtle* ſays in another Caſe, *Let God be true, and every Man a liar.*

VII. VII*thly* and *Laſtly*, I deſire it may be conſidered, That it is not repugnant to Reaſon to believe ſome things which are incomprehenſible by our Reaſon; provided that we have ſufficient ground and

and reaſon for the belief of them: Eſpecially if they be concerning *God*, who is in his Nature *Incomprehenſible*; and we be well aſſured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us that theſe *Differences* in the *Deity* are *incomprehenſible* by our finite underſtandings; becauſe the *Divine Nature* it ſelf is ſo, and yet the belief of *that* is the Foundation of all Religion.

There are a great many things in *Nature* which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the *Continuity of Matter*, that is, how the parts of it do hang ſo faſt together that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are ſure that it is ſo, becauſe we ſee it every day. So likewiſe how the ſmall *Seeds* of things contain the whole *Form* and *Nature* of the things from which they proceed and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly ſee this every year.

There are many things likewiſe in our *Selves*, which no man is able in any meaſure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the *vital union* of *Soul* and *Body*: Who can imagine by what device or means a *Spirit* comes to be ſo cloſely united and ſo firmly link'd to a *material Body*, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offer'd to Nature? The like may be ſaid of the operations

tions of our ſeveral *Faculties* of *Senſe* and *Imagination*, of *Memory* and *Reaſon*, and eſpecially of the *Liberty* of our *Wills*: And yet we certainly find all theſe *Faculties* in our ſelves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the ſeveral Operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of thoſe Operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be be in our *Selves*, much leſs can we expect to comprehend things without us; and leaſt of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, and every thing belonging to Him. For God himſelf is certainly the greateſt *Myſtery* of all other, and acknowledged by Mankind to be in his Nature, and in the particular manner of his Exiſtence, incomprehenſible by Human Underſtanding. And the reaſon of this is very evident, becauſe God is infinite, and our knowledge and underſtanding is but finite; and yet no ſober man ever thought this a good reaſon to call the Being of God in queſtion.

The ſame may be ſaid of God's certain foreknowledge of future Contingencies which depend upon the uncertain Wills of free Agents: It being utterly inconceivable how any Underſtanding, how large and perfect ſoever, can certainly

tainly know beforehand that which depends upon the *free Will* of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain Cauſe.

And yet the *Scripture* doth not only attribute this Foreknowledg to God, but gives us alſo plain Inſtances of Gods foretelling ſuch things, many Ages before they happen'd, as could not come to paſs but by the Sins of Men, in which we are ſure that God can have no hand; though nothing can happen without his permiſſion: Such was that moſt memorable Event of the Death of *Chriſt* who, as the *Scripture* tells us, was *by wicked hands crucified and ſlain*; and yet even *this* is ſaid to have happened *according to the determinate foreknowledg of God*, and was punctually foretold by Him ſome hundreds of years before. Nay, the *Scripture* doth not only aſcribe this power and perfection to the *Divine* Knowledge, but *natural Reaſon* hath been forced to acknowledg it, as we may ſee in ſome of the wiſeſt of the *Philoſophers*. And yet it would puzzle the greateſt *Philoſopher* that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any Knowledg whatſoever can certainly and infallibly foreſee an Event through uncertain and contingent Cauſes. All the reaſonable ſatisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that *infinite Knowledg* may have ways of knowing

things which our *finite Underſtandings* can by no means comprehend how they can poſſibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable than how a thing ſhould be of it ſelf, and without any Cauſe of its Being; and yet our Reaſon compels us to acknowledge this: Becauſe we certainly ſee that ſomething is, which muſt either have been of it ſelf and without a Cauſe, or elſe ſomething that we do not ſee muſt have been of it ſelf and have made all other things: And by this reaſoning we are forced to acknowledg a *Deity*, the mind of Man being able to find no reſt but in the acknowledgment of one *eternal* and *wiſe Mind* as the *Principle* and *firſt Cauſe* of all other things; and this *Principle* is that which Mankind do by general conſent call *God*. So that God hath laid a ſure foundation of our acknowledgment of his Being in the Reaſon of our own Minds: And though it be one of the hardeſt things in the world to conceive how any thing can be of it ſelf, yet neceſſity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no: And this being once granted, our Reaſon, being tired in trying all other ways, will for its own quiet and eaſe force us at laſt to fall in with the general apprehenſion and belief of Mankind concerning a *Deity*.

To

To give but one *Inſtance* more; There is the like Difficulty in conceiving *how any thing can be made* out of nothing; and yet our Reaſon doth oblige us to believe it: Becauſe *Matter*, which is a very *imperfect Being* and merely *paſſive*, muſt either always have been of it ſelf; or elſe, by the infinite Power of a moſt *perfect and active Being*, muſt have been made out of nothing: Which is much more credible, than that any thing ſo *imperfect* as *Matter* is ſhould be of it ſelf: Becauſe that which is of it ſelf cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its *Being* and *Perfection*; for by the ſame reaſon that it neceſſarily is and of it ſelf, it muſt neceſſarily have all perfection, which it is certain *Matter* hath not; and yet *neceſſary Exiſtence* is ſo great a Perfection, that we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe any thing that hath this Perfection to want any other.

Thus you ſee, by theſe *Inſtances*, that it is not repugnant to Reaſon to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whoſe Exiſtence we are not able to give a particular and diſtinct account. And much leſs is it repugnant to Reaſon to believe thoſe things concerning God which we are very well aſſured he hath declared concerning Himſelf, though theſe things by our Reaſon ſhould be incomprehenſible.

And this is truly the Caſe as to the matter now under debate: We are ſufficiently aſſured that the *Scriptures* are a *Divine Revelation*, and that this *Myſtery* of the *Trinity* is therein declared to us. Now that we cannot comprehend it, is no ſufficient Reaſon not to believe it: For if this were a good Reaſon for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a God, becauſe his Nature is moſt certainly incomprehenſible. But we are aſſured by many Arguments that there is a God; and the ſame *natural Reaſon* which aſſures us that *He is*, doth likewiſe aſſure us that *He is incomprehenſible*; and therefore our believing Him to be ſo doth by no means overthrow our belief of His Being.

In like manner, we are aſſured by *Divine Revelation* of the truth of this Doctrine of the *Trinity*; and being once aſſured of *that*, our not being able fully to comprehend it is not reaſon enough to ſtagger our belief of it. A man cannot deny what he ſees, though the neceſſary conſequence of admitting it may be ſomething which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the Frame of this World which he ſees with his eyes, though from thence it will neceſſarily follow that either *that* or ſomething elſe muſt be of it ſelf; which yet, as I ſaid before, is a thing which no man can comprehend how it can be.

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And by the ſame Reaſon a man muſt not deny what God ſays, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which God ſays: As particularly concerning this *Myſtery* of the *Trinity*. It ought then to ſatisfy us that there is ſufficient evidence that this Doctrine is delivered in *Scripture*, and that what is there declared concerning it doth not imply a Contradiction. For why ſhould our finite underſtandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite, or to know all the real *Differences* that are conſiſtent with the Unity of an Infinite Being; or to be able fully to explain this *Myſtery* by any ſimilitude or reſemblance taken from *finite Beings*?

But before I leave this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the *Church* of *Rome* are perpetually objecting to us upon this Occaſion. And it is this, That by the ſame reaſon that we believe the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, we may and muſt receive that of *Tranſubſtantiation*. God forbid: Becauſe of all the *Doctrines* that ever were in any Religion, this of *Tranſubſtantiation* is certainly the moſt abominably abſurd.

However, this *Objection* plainly ſhews how fondly and obſtinately they are addicted to their own Errors, how miſhapen and monſtrous ſoever; inſomuch that rather than the Dictates of their

their Church, how abſurd ſoever, ſhould be called in queſtion they will queſtion the truth even of *Chriſtianity* it ſelf; and if we will not take in *Tranſubſtantiation*, and admit it to be a *neceſſary Article* of the *Chriſtian Faith*, they grow ſo ſullen and deſperate that they matter not what becomes of all the reſt: And rather than not have their Will of us in that what is *controverted*, they will give up that which by their own confeſſion is an *undoubted Article* of the *Chriſtian Faith* and not controverted on either Side; except only by the *Socinians*, who yet are hearty Enemies to *Tranſubſtantiation*, and have expoſed the abſurdity of it with great advantage.

But I ſhall endeavour to return a more particular *Anſwer* to this *Objection*; and ſuch a one as I hope will ſatisfy every conſiderate and unprejudiced mind, that after all this confidence and ſwaggering of theirs there is by no means equal reaſon either for the *receiving* or for the *rejecting* of theſe *two Doctrines* of the *Trinity* and *Tranſubſtantiation*.

Firſt, There is not equal reaſon for the *belief* of theſe *Two Doctrines*. This *Objection*, if it be of any force, muſt ſuppoſe that there is equal evidence and proof from *Scripture* for theſe *two Doctrines*: But this we utterly deny, and with great reaſon; becauſe it is no more evident from the

the words of *Scripture* that the *Sacramental Bread* is ſubſtantially changed into *Chriſt's natural Body* by virtue of thoſe words, *This is my Body*, than it is that *Chriſt* is ſubſtantially changed into a *natural Vine* by virtue of thoſe words, *I am the true Vine*; or than that the *Rock* in the Wilderneſs, of which the *Iſraelites* drank, was ſubſtantially changed into the *Perſon of Chriſt*, becauſe it is expreſly ſaid, *That Rock was Chriſt*; or than that the *Chriſtian Church* is ſubſtantially changed into the *natural Body* of *Chriſt*, becauſe it is in expreſs terms ſaid of the *Church*, That *it is his Body*. Joh. 15. 1. Eph. 1. 23.

But beſides this, ſeveral of their own moſt learned *Writers* have freely acknowledged, that *Tranſubſtantiation* can neither be directly proved, nor neceſſarily concluded from *Scripture*: But this the *Writers* of the *Chriſtian Church* did never acknowledge concerning the *Trinity*, and the *Divinity* of *Chriſt*; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable Teſtimonies of *Scripture* for the Proof of theſe *Doctrines*. And then the whole force of the Objection amounts to this, that if I am bound to believe what I am ſure God ſays, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the ſame reaſon to believe the greateſt Abſurdity in the World, though I have no manner of aſſurance of any *Divine Revelation* concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though

we

we underſtand not *Tranſubſtantiation*, yet we very well underſtand what they would have, but cannot grant it; becauſe there is not equal reaſon to believe *two* things, for *one* of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

Secondly, neither is there equal reaſon for the *rejecting* of theſe *two Doctrines*. This the Objection ſuppoſes, which yet cannot be ſuppoſed but upon one or both of theſe two grounds: Either becauſe theſe two Doctrines are equally *incomprehenſible*, or becauſe they are equally loaded with *Abſurdities* and *Contradictions*.

The *Firſt* is no good ground of *rejecting* any *Doctrine*, merely becauſe it is *incomprehenſible*; as I have abundantly ſhew'd already. But beſides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of *Senſe*, and *Myſteries* concerning God; and it does by no means follow that, if a man do once admit any thing concerning God which he cannot *comprehend*, he hath no reaſon afterwards to believe what he himſelf *ſees*. This is a moſt unreaſonable and deſtructive way of arguing, becauſe it ſtrikes at the foundation of all Certainty, and ſets every man at liberty to deny the moſt plain and evident *Truths* of *Chriſtianity*, if he may not be humor'd in having the abſurdeſt things in the World admitted for true. The next ſtep will be to perſuade us that we may as well deny

deny the Being of *God* becauſe his Nature is *incomprehenſible* by our *Reaſon*, as deny *Tranſubſtantiation* becauſe *it evidently contradicts* our *Senſes*.

2*dly*. Nor are theſe *two Doctrines* loaded with the like *Abſurdities* and *Contradictions*: So far from this, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as it is delivered in the *Scriptures*, and hath already been explained, hath no Abſurdity or Contradiction either involved in it, or neceſſarily conſequent upon it: But the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* is big with all imaginable Abſurdity and Contradiction. And their own *Schoolmen* have ſufficiently expoſed it; eſpecially *Scotus*, and he deſigned to do ſo, as any man that attentively reads him may plainly diſcover: For in his *Diſputation* about it he treats this *Doctrine* with the greateſt contempt, as a new Invention of the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* III. To the *Decree* of which *Council* concerning it he ſeems to pay a formal ſubmiſſion, but really derides it as contrary to the common *Senſe* and *Reaſon* of Mankind, and not at all ſupported by *Scripture*; as any one may eaſily diſcern that will carefully conſider his manner of handling it and the reſult of his whole *Diſputation* about it.

And now Suppoſe there were ſome appearance of Abſurdity and Contradiction in the Doctrine of the *Trinity* as it is delivered in *Scripture*, muſt we therefore believe a Doctrine which is

not at all revealed in *Scripture*, and which hath certainly in it all the *abſurdities* in the World, and all the *Contradictions* to *Senſe* and *Reaſon*; and which once admitted, doth at once deſtroy all Certainty. Yes, ſay they, why not? ſince we of the *Church* of *Rome* are ſatisfied that this *Doctrine* is revealed in *Scripture*; or, if it be not, is defined by the Church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between *us* and *them*, but even among themſelves, at leaſt till the *Council* of *Trent*? And this upon ſuch unreaſonable terms, that we muſt either yield this *Point* to them or elſe renounce a *Doctrine* agreed on both Sides to be revealed in *Scripture*.

To ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this proceeding, Let us ſuppoſe a *Prieſt* of the Church of *Rome* preſſing a *Jew* or *Turk* to the belief of *Tranſubſtantiation*, and becauſe one kindneſs deſerves another, the *Jew* or *Turk* ſhould demand of him the belief of all the *Fables* in the *Talmud*, or in the *Alchoran*; ſince none of theſe, nor indeed all of them together, are near ſo abſurd as *Tranſubſtantiation*: Would not this be much more reaſonable and equal than what they demand of us? Since no Abſurdity, how monſtrous and big ſoever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an Underſtanding in which a Breach hath been

been already made wide enough to admit *Tranſubſtantiation*. The Prieſts of *Baal* did not half ſo much deſerve to be expoſed by the *Prophet* for their Superſtition and folly, as the Prieſts of the Church of *Rome* do for this ſenſleſs and ſtupid *Doctrine* of theirs with a *hard Name*. I ſhall only add this one thing more, That if this Doctrine were poſſible to be true, and clearly prov'd to be ſo; yet it would be evidently uſeleſs and to no purpoſe. For it pretends to change the ſubſtance of one thing into the ſubſtance of another thing that is already and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpoſe? Not to make the *Body* of Chriſt, for that was already in Being; and the Subſtance of the *Bread* is loſt, nothing of it remaineth but the *Accidents* which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing when the Subſtance is deſtroy'd and gone.

All that now remains is to make ſome *practical Inferences* from this *Doctrine* of the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*. And they ſhall be the ſame which God himſelf makes by *Moſes*, which *Text* alſo is cited by our *Saviour*, *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength: And thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.* So that according to our *Saviour* the whole Duty of Man, the *love of God* and *of our neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the Divine *Nature*. I. The

Deut. 6. 4. Mark 12. 29, 30, 31.

I. The *love of God*; *The Lord thy God is One Lord*, therefore *thou ſhalt love Him with all thy heart*, &c. *this is the firſt and great Commandment*: And it comprehends in it all the *Duties* of the *firſt Table* as naturally flowing from it. As that we ſhould *ſerve Him only*, and pay no *Religious Worſhip* to any but to *Him*. For to pay *Religious Worſhip* to any thing is to make it *a God* and to acknowledge it for ſuch: And therefore *God* being but *One* we can give *Religious Worſhip* to none but to *Him* only. And among all the parts of *Religious Worſhip* none is more peculiarly appropriated to the *Deity* than *ſolemn Invocation* and *Prayer*. For he to whom men addreſs their Requeſts, at all times, and in all places, muſt be ſuppoſed to be always every where preſent, to underſtand all our deſires and wants, and to be able to ſupply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewiſe from the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* may be inferr'd, that we ſhould not worſhip God by any *ſenſible Image* or Repreſentation: Becauſe *God* being a *ſingular Being* there is nothing like *Him*, or that can without injuring and debaſing his moſt *ſpiritual* and *perfect* and *immenſe Being* be compared to *Him*: As *He* himſelf ſpeaks in
Iſai. 46. 5. the *Prophet*, *To whom will ye liken me, ſaith the Lord, and make me equal?* And therefore with no *Diſtinction* whatſoever can it be lawful to give *Religious Worſhip*, or any part of it, to any but *God*: We

can *pray* to none but to *Him*, becauſe *He only* is every where preſent, and *only knows the Hearts of all the children of men*; which *Solomon* gives as the reaſon why we ſhould addreſs our Supplications to *God* only, *who dwelleth in the Heavens*. 1 Kings 8. 39.

So that the Reaſon of theſe *two Precepts* is founded in the *Unity* and *Singularity* of the *Divine Nature*, and unleſs there be more *Gods* than *One*, we muſt *worſhip Him only*, and *pray* to none but *Him*: Becauſe we can give *Invocation* to none but to *Him only* whom we believe to be *God*; as St. *Paul* reaſons, *How ſhall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* Rom. 10. 14.

II. The *love* likewiſe of our *Neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, and may be inferr'd from it: *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord thy God is One Lord, therefore thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*. And the *Apoſtle* gives this reaſon why *Chriſtians* ſhould be at unity among themſelves; *There is One God and Father of all*, and therefore we ſhould *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*, that is, live in mutual love and peace. The *Prophet* likewiſe aſſigns this reaſon why all Mankind ſhould be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, *Have we not all One Father? hath not One God created us? Why do we then deal treacherouſly every man againſt his brother*. Eph. 4 6. Mal. 2. 10.

And therefore when we ſee ſuch hatred and enmity among *Men*, ſuch diviſions and animoſities

ſities among *Chriſtians*, we may not only ask St. *Paul's* queſtion, Is Chriſt divided? that we cannot agree about ſerving him; either all to ſerve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences: I ſay we may not only ask St. *Paul's* queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided?* but may ask further, *Is God divided?* Is there not *One* God, and are we not all his Offspring? Are we not all the Sons of *Adam*, *who was the Son of God?* So that if we trace our ſelves to our *Original*, we ſhall find a great nearneſs and equality among men: And this equality that we are all Gods *creatures* and *Image*, and that the *One only God* is the *Father of us all*, is a more real ground of mutual *love*, and *peace*, and *equity* in our dealings one with another, than any of thoſe petty differences and diſtinctions of *ſtrong* and *weak*, of *rich* and *poor*, of *wiſe* and *fooliſh*, of *baſe* and *honourable*, can be to encourage men to any thing of *inſolence*, *injuſtice*, and *inequality of dealing* one towards another. Becauſe *that* wherein we all agree, that we are the *Creatures* and *Children of God* and have all *One* common *Father*, is eſſential and conſtant; but thoſe things wherein we differ are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken concerning the *firſt Propoſition* in the *Text*, *There is one God*: To *Him*, *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt* be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.* FINIS.